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The story, an outline of which we have now given, occupies but a part of the two volumes; the remainder is filled by five of what are here styled novels, but should be properly called moral tales. The first is the relation of a most singular penance inflicted by a husband on a wife guilty of infidelity. The idea is novel, and all the circumstances are singular and interesting. The second, styled the Lovers without Love, is of a very different cast from the rest; it contains more of modern French manners and intrigue. Indeed it scarcely deserves the name of moral tale, as the only deduction to be drawn from it is, that unhappiness is the consequence of marriages arising from love, while those who marry from what are generally called prudential motives, obtain that felicity which the other vainly flattered themselves with. Its name is also faulty: Lovers without Love is a contradiction in terms, unbecoming a writer of sense or taste. The third and fourth are fairy tales; the moral is good, but this manner of deducing a moral we have always thought exceptionable. The interference of supernatural beings serves only to bewilder the imagination; they have no prototype in nature; the mind, when interested, is raised into an ideal creation, whence it descends unwillingly into the common haunts of life; and the conclusions drawn from such agents are generally supposed to partake of the impossibility of the source from whence they spring.

But the disappointment accruing from the perusal of these is well repaid by the perusal of that which concludes the volume. It is a tale founded on nature, and calculated to excite the tenderest, finest feelings of the soul. It is the story of two sisters, twins, whom the impartial fondness of a mother has educated with such scrupulous impartiality that the similarity of features bestowed by nature, was rendered still more striking by a corresponding similarity of character impressed by habit. The little incidents tending to illustrate this coincidence of manners are introduced with great delicacy and judgment; they are the production of a person who has felt and studiously discriminated the various distinguishing shades of the female character, in its highest state of purity and refinement. The sisters are described as living with that union of sentiment which is so seldom to be found, even between those whom mutual choice has bound in the most solemn tie of mutual affection; they are but one soul inhabiting two bodies, until the arrival of a stranger, who loves one of them, and is equally loved in return, dissipates the pleasing illusion, and for a time dissolves an union formed by nature, and encreasing with encreasing years. The termination is melancholy; yet even such a catastrophe is the parent of a pleasure peculiar in its nature. The moral arising from it is forcible and impressive. Q.

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*Woman: or Ida of Athens, by Miss Owenson, 4 vols. 12mo. p. p. 979. Longman Hurst and Rees, London, 1809.*

SIMONIDES (to a learned lady we may talk of learned men) Simonides (yet it may be necessary for the information of some of our readers who have not dived as deep in classic lore as the writer of the pages now before us, to acquaint them that he was a poet, who has written some verses on the characters of women, more celebrated for wit than politeness) Simonides, who, though a Grecian, does not express that enthusiastic admiration of those animated models of the fairest of God's works, that seems to have taken possession of Miss Owenson's imagination, divides the female species into nine classes, attributing to each a character derived from some animal whose qualities were blended in it when moulded by the Gods. Some, says he, were formed from the cat, some from the monkey, some from the mare, some from the ass, and a few from the Bee. We have during the perusal of the work now before us, amused ourselves with guessing to what description of clean or unclean beasts, he would have referred the class of novel-writers, had such a race of non-descript animals existed in his days. He would not improbably have said that their souls were formed from that of the spider, incessantly spinning an endless worthless

web from its own body, for the sole purpose of catching flies to feed on. For of all the creatures that ever nature gave birth to, a novel writer, employing the talents and industry and ingenuity bestowed on it for some good purpose, in the cause of indolence and idleness and vicious indulgence, is the most disgusting. The philosopher may pause for a moment to inspect the fabrick, may view with melancholy admiration the ill-employed labour with which it draws its long winded thread, the perverted ingenuity with which it winds its intricate meanders to catch the unwary victims of its arts, the resolution and perseverance with which, when its first labours are lost or rendered useless it recommences its toils; but immediately on turning from it, treads the reptile under foot as a nuisance to society; and the web which it has formed, after remaining a short time through indolence in the walks and haunts of man, is swept away, and consigned to the oblivion whence it should never have been extricated.

To this class must be referred every work of imagination whose main object is not instruction. Like poetry it admits of no medium; it must be either good or bad: and if the former does not predominate, if a clear plain useful moral does not shew itself throughout the volume, not elicited by an exertion of the mind, but presenting itself spontaneously to the understanding we should not hesitate for a moment in forming our decision. It matters not what may be its other merits: The interest of narrative, the charm of style and composition diminish rather than encrease its claims to our approbation; the beauties and external accomplishments of a female who has once lost that which gave them their true charm, become the most dangerous instruments of seduction.

It is with unfeigned regret that we are compelled to refer the work before us to this class. If we sympathize with the feelings of our countrymen, who raise the character of their native soil in the literary world, if we feel a glow of honest pride at the praises they receive, and say within ourselves "I too am an Irishman:" what must be our emotions, when justice not only forbids us to praise, but calls upon us to censure and condemn. Our attachment to our country and our respect to the female sex, combine in making our decision more forcible and determined. We cannot approve of what reflects no credit on the former, and when a woman appears before the public, it should be from a strong sense of public duty: her intention should be clearly and unequivocally demonstrated.

From the name bestowed upon this Novel, Miss Owenson appears to have intended her heroine as a model for her sex's imitation. The observations about to be made will shew the model to be faulty and dangerous. She seems also to have recurred to a method resorted to by the apostles of the new philosophy, of making works of fancy a vehicle for their peculiar opinions. They did it for the purpose of disseminating their principles more widely. Had they been confined to treatises written for the purpose, they would have been little read, and therefore little harm could accrue from them. But being thus intruded on the public in an unsuspected manner and in places where there was little opportunity of controverting them, and falling into the hands of a class of readers accustomed to take opinions on trust, they stole upon the mind and were rooted there before their dangerous tendency was suspected. We are far from attributing any such intention to the author of the present work. But a writer should be very cautious of publishing without the most mature and deliberate investigation, new or peculiar opinions on these great points of morality, on which the welfare of society depends.

With respect to the narrative, or what in poetry is called the fable, there are two commonplace modes of arrangement, two beaten paths in which the great tribe of novel-mongers who find it more congenial to their talents to imitate than invent, trudge along this flowery path to fame. In the one, the heroine, for the principal character of a novel now-a-days must be a female, is gradually raised from obscurity by an unexpected train of

circumstances; to fortune and rank. In the other, a well known character sinks gradually from wealth to poverty, and the reader's interest is excited by her struggles to rise, or her fortitude in bearing up against its evils. Miss Owenson has chosen the last. It is with no small degree of surprise that we find her condescending to follow when she had given proofs of invention and originality in a former work.

A Grecian Merchant, who had realized a fortune at the price of his health and peace of mind in England, returned to his native country and settled at Athens, in which city his brother, one of the antient nobility of Attica, resided. The daughter of this brother is the heroine of the tale. From her uncle she received the rudiments of an education which in our author's opinion was to render her superior to the rest of her sex. The system chosen by her, borders very closely on that so ably depicted in the "Modern Philosophers;" all was left to nature; energies do every thing. "Every Jill," says the old proverb, "must have her Jack." A heroine is nothing without a sympathizing hero. Such a one is introduced in the character of a young slave of the Disdar Aga (we like these high-sounding names, particularly where they tinkle like Greek) vulgarly called the Turkish Military Governor of the city. He introduces himself like his renowned progenitors in Romance by killing a huge wolf, shooting at a mark, and relieving the distressed. After the first interview, which is decisive of the future destinies of the two principal characters, we see no more of him until Ida again appears in public, where he attends her disguised like an Armenian, but in attempting to rescue an injured Greek from the fury of a party of Janissaries, discovers himself, is seized and carried prisoner before the Aga. Ida throws herself before the judge's feet and pleads for the victim. Her arguments, when addressed to a Turk who despised the Greeks and hated their religion, are somewhat singular; and must have been powerfully aided by the *lightning of the eye, the panting bosom. the clustering tresses, the soul-beaming expression, the white and rounded arms of Ida.*

"No," says she, "he shall not, must not die,—die! Gracious God! for what? for defending the rights of nature, *of freedom*, of humanity; It was a Greek, a poor compatriot, he saved! it was age and feebleness he succoured, *it was bigotry he struck at! it was tyranny he opposed.* He now appears before you, not to receive death, but to demand retribution. He stands before you *the representative of his injured country*, violated in her dearest principles, denied her dearest rights —*oppressed, debased, and wounded, &c.*"

Yet it had its effects. Osmyn is liberated on condition of quitting the country, but remains in secret at the house of Ida's uncle. Here their mutual intimacy increased. Each is deeply enamoured of the other. not only without discovering their mutual sentiments, but even without knowing their own. At length however an opportunity occurs, too tempting to both author and actors, to escape. Osmyn breaks the ice. His style of making love is equally sublime with that of his Mistress's pleadings.

"If we might speculate on heavenly joys we should attribute to them an influence such as these awaken—heavens! what a language to a soul that feels! what words, what tongue, what looks can give the heart's emotion utterance—Lady! you saved my life—Oh! more—you gave me new existence; and yet—even now—in moments such as these—so near you too—so unobserved—I dare not—must not—cannot speak my feelings!"

Ida answers very reasonably, "*and wherefore need you?*" a reply which in our opinion was sufficient to bring down Eschylus himself from his Iambics.

Osmyn however has a rival. The Aga, Turk as he is, falls in love with Ida; she visits his daughter Jumeli in the citadel; Osmyn is jealous; this, together with a thunder storm, gives rise to another love scene. Osmyn increases in *pathos*. In his first attempt he lost his speech; he is now about to lose his life, but is raised again to existence by the voice of Ida.

The Aga, on his part suspects the intimacy, and persuades her father, who is represented as a weak, turbulent, discontented, factious citizen, proud of his birth and fortune, a character by

no means ill designed or badly drawn, to recall her from her uncle's: she returns, and shortly after her uncle's death is announced by Osmyn. This is the only time he appears in her father's presence, who cannot brook the idea of his daughter's union with a slave. However some love-letters pass between them, in which Ida, like a dutiful daughter, refuses to have a private interview with Osmyn. At length however he touches the string to which her soul vibrates. He had been engaged in a conspiracy to throw off the Turkish yoke: he declares that he will relinquish the cause unless he be inspired by her approbation. Ida was a patriot: what she refused to love, she grants to her country. They meet at midnight, are surprised by her father and the Aga: the former secures his daughter, but the other is put to flight by Osmyn, who thus escapes.

A scene of a different nature now presents itself. Osmyn, who, though he knew that the desire of seeing her country liberated from the yoke of the infidels was the favourite wish of Ida, and that to make himself worthy of her was the principal idea that occupied his soul, yet, by a strange perversity of thought very unbecoming a hero, and inconsistent with the character which he is intended to support, neglects the friends with whom he had associated for this purpose, and employs the time that should have been spent in forwarding their preparations, in the boyish pleasure of dangling after Ida. At one time we hear of him loitering under the walls of the Acropolis (*vulgo*, the Citadel) at another piping under Ida's chamber or gaping up at her window. In short in reading this tale we may lay it down as a general rule very necessary to explain certain obscure passages and confused incidents, that, like a pair of magpies, whenever we meet with one of these lovers, the other is not far off.

However when Osmyn has lost his mistress he thinks of his friends, and after making use of a pitiful falshood to excuse his negligence, they proceed to business. A debate follows, in the conduct of which we would have advised Miss O. to have studied "Venice preserved," where she would have met with a history of a conspiracy painted in true colours. The Turkish Aga discovers their place of meeting, a guard of Janizaries is sent to seize them, a battle ensues, in which numbers and discipline prevail over patriotism; the Athenians are routed, slaughtered, and their leader taken prisoner.

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